

November 1, 2011

The Honorable John Mica, Chairman  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
2187 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nick Rahall, Ranking Member  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
2307 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of America's anglers, conservationists, scientists and fisheries managers, wish to express our strong support for H.R. 3096, the RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act of 2011. This important legislation will direct 80 percent of Clean Water Act (CWA) penalties charged to BP to the restoration of the Gulf Coast environment and economy. We request that the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee act swiftly to move this important legislation forward.

A healthy ecosystem and robust fish populations are vital to the well-being of the Gulf's society and economy, as they provide jobs for citizens and recreational enjoyment for millions. Recreational fishing alone contributes \$41 billion dollars in economic output in the Gulf Coast region annually and supports over 300,000 jobs. The combination of the biological impacts and the public's perception of the extent of those impacts resulting from the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil disaster caused severe economic harm to the region. The RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 will provide tremendous and much-needed benefits for the thousands of fishery dependent businesses who continue to try and rebound from the oil spill's economic and environmental impacts.

The RESTORE the Gulf Act of 2011 establishes the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council to develop and fund a comprehensive plan for the ecological recovery and resiliency of the Gulf Coast. To address critical gaps in fisheries data, the Act also establishes an endowment that will provide funding for needed fisheries stock assessments and ecosystem monitoring among other things. It is critically important that we invest in short- and long-term fisheries data collection to help gather the science needed to properly manage fish stocks.

The Gulf Coast ecosystem and the individuals, businesses and communities dependent on it need recovery dollars as soon as possible. The Gulf of Mexico region faces a lengthy challenge ahead to recover from the impacts of the oil spill, and without prompt Congressional action the region will receive none of the CWA funds that it justly deserves. We request your support of the RESTORE the Gulf Coast Act of 2011 and urge you to work to pass it as swiftly as possible.

Sincerely,

American Fisheries Society  
American Fly Fishing Trade Association  
American Sportfishing Association  
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
B.A.S.S., LLC  
Berkley Conservation Institute, Pure Fishing  
Center for Coastal Conservation

Coastal Conservation Association  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
International Game Fish Association  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
Shimano Sport Fisheries Initiative  
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

cc: Members, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee